

An Adventurer Retires

Outside the movies, a soldier of fortune is a military prostitute, without honor, security or friends

by HILAIRE DU BERRIER
• ARTICLE •

THE people who publish *Adventure Magazine* and write the scenarios for Gary Cooper's films, may Allah spit on their upturned faces as they pray.

To you who sigh while Ronald Colman leads a cavalry charge across some foreign plain or swaggers, uniformed, through a market place where the camels wear bells and a muezzin comes out on a minaret calling true believers to their prayers, I'll tell you something:

Ronald and Gary get paid for acting that stuff but adventurers get in trouble for doing it.

Messrs. Cooper and Colman and Gable show you the end as it isn't, and when his day's work is over Mr. Colman leaves the "papier-mâché" setting that represents the bombed town we were in or the port where we had fever.

He washes his make-up off and goes back to a fine home in Beverly Hills and wonders whether to toss off a cocktail alone or spend another buck and invite someone to have one with him.

That's adventure as it ought to be, but I'll tell you something about it as it is; it's learning to speak ten languages but to say: "I am happy," in none of them.

It's having every meal come as a pleasant surprise. It's loneliness and worry and a lousy life. It's ending up in cursed little ports of heat with a fever and beard and ragged shoes and no money.

When you had money you threw it away on anyone that would have a drink with you, and when you haven't there's no one around to say: "Come on, old horse, and sit down."

The end of most every adventure is in some port that you can't get out of, in a room that you can't pay the rent on, looking at a book of pictures and a couple of medals, and using Black Flag for talcum powder.

I used to think adventure was being a dashing young man with a grin on his face who rode through life, figuratively speaking, singing a song and throwing a sword in the air. I thought it was following armies into a captured town and looking on workaday men as crusaders looked on a peasant.

Also I thought it was whispers and moonlight and green palm trees and blue seas and dark places and promises and one woman

whose eyes would sparkle like the flash of sunlight on bayonets, but it wasn't.

Adventure is waiting in some God-awful land for a Negro or a Chinaman or a Rumanian to get ready to see you and then waiting for your pay or your contract or a battle or a chance to get out.

The one thing in a war you never learn is the joy of sacking a captured town, or marching in with the drums rolling and tanks roaring up and down the streets, because if there's a chance of capturing any towns

maybe on the same side and maybe not.

Other men talk "shop" when they get together, and a soldier of fortune can't talk their shop; he's a rank outsider.

American consuls and respectable workaday citizens despise him. Never tell them you knew Wehib Pasha when he was pushing Graziani back down along the Webbi-Shebili or that you have seen all those ports on the posters of where ships go.

They think you haven't any right to have been there and will hate you for having cheated them, or else they'll call you a bloody liar and say "Adventurer" in a different tone than they reserve for Ronald Colman and Errol Flynn.

There is a story about an American who was captured and condemned to be shot in South America, so he sent for his consul and said: "For God's sake do something; telephone Washington, cable the President—do something for me!" And the consul said: "Now, see here, old chap; what do you want to bother the State Department about this for?"

Don't let anyone tell you women are romantic and will be won by the stories you bring back from the far places. Security is the only State adventurers never know and that's the only one women want to live in.

When I close my eyes I think of that sweltering cargo boat plowing through heat and the Red Sea on the way to Abyssinia.

Frenchmen, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, a Pole, some Swiss, a couple of Negroes, and God only knows what else were off with high spirits to where the papers said a war was going

to be. They were the merriest bunch of fighting, spitting, swearing, drinking, bottle-smashing cutthroats a man could meet.

A bearded French colonial spit contemptuously at a fish and said: "A whole shipload going to Abyssinia and not a lifeboat full will come back," but no one gave a damn. Every man thought he was going to be in the lifeboat and what might happen to the others didn't matter.

Two men died on the way—*mais tant pis*;—someone has to die.

In Abyssinia we ate eggs that smelled and drank milk from a cow that was sick. Our cook boy had syphilis and when we lifted

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Come on Skeptics

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I'VE TRIED 'EM BEFORE and I know the idea's good, but I can't get a good shave with an electric razor.



I'LL SHOW YOU WHY. Now look. Am I using it right? Most electric razors leave a stubble or chafe my face.



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CASCO '75' ELECTRIC SAFETY RAZOR

The Young Warrior

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goods of value. While we were doing that, Crooked Nose came up. We were all much interested by the way the woman was dressed. Her skirt was really two skirts, one for each leg, and under it were many layers of clothing, mostly white. We examined them, wondering why anyone should make herself so uncomfortable, and joking about how hard she would be to undress. Then Nantai told us to stop fooling. We took our plunder and the captured horses, and swung back in a wide circle to the road.

We found the wagon train late in the afternoon. It had gone a few miles, and then stopped, to wait for its leader, we supposed. Now its leader and two more of its men were dead. We stayed quiet till after dark. They had fewer men to stand watch, and no one with real experience. A little before dawn two of us started

shooting from one side, with the new rifles we had captured. The rest of us came along on the other side and ran off sixteen of their horses.

We met together on the south side of the valley, and rode all that day, making camp in comfort at sunset. Then we divided what we had taken.

On the back of her saddle, that woman had tied a bundle containing a dress of beautiful, smooth material. This new headband of mine—look—is a part of it. She also had more of those clothes for wearing underneath, of fine materials. Horse Frightener put on some of them, and we joked with him. I received that headband, this coat—it belonged to the father—this new rifle that loads from the back, and four horses. Then we came home at our leisure, talking over all that we had seen, and finding much to laugh at. #

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our eyes from our food they fell on a leper, but it was better than Monte Carlo.

This is typical adventure; you live like a native for eleven months and stick your money in the Bank of Ethiopia, saving silver thalers so you can go back to a little village in central France where you left your books and a paint box, and the next thing you know you find yourself in Djibouti.

With a sun-burnt curve of sea front before you and the Somaliland desert behind, you sit down to think it over. When the Italians arrived in Addis Ababa they took the bank.

The charred hulk of a French liner, half-submerged, sticks out of the water like a grim memorial to disaster. Haile Selassie passed it when he left that port for the last time.

You get fever in Djibouti but you haven't the price of quinine, and quinine is the rent you pay on life.

There's a telegraph office but they don't send telegrams collect. Mail leaves twice a month.

You live in an Arab's house and day after day you watch the waterfront shimmer in the heat with the Belgian officers who are stranded with you and remark that Djibouti is the home of dervishes.

The decayed boats fall to pieces along the beach and waves wash through the ribs of a rotting Arab dhow in the shallows. You wonder if you could make that dhow float before your letter comes.

You get thin in the heat and can't eat or sleep or bother to shave or even wash, and when the fever comes you think you're looking at the world through the "prop" of a pursuit job again.

Then something gets in your eyes and your eyes get sick, but a bottle of Optraex costs fifteen francs—and you're an adventurer

waiting for a letter, you're not Dick Haliburton.

When you get in trouble in a strange land there's nothing to do but wait or connive your way out as best you can. If you go to your consulate you'll have to get yourself out anyway, plus some more trouble for having bothered the consul, so you go down to the brothel for the French army instead where you know you'll get sympathy and a café-turk even if you haven't fifteen francs.

You may even get the loan of a hundred-franc-note in the French brothel.

I think the third republic must have been paying those women, because everyone I knew borrowed from them. They didn't seem like prostitutes; they were old comrades:

Twice a month a white boat came for a day and you watched it sail off with tears in your eyes; then you went to the *bureau de poste* to see if you had a letter.

If the day happened to be Sunday they opened the *poste* anyway. What the hell! Little Madame Beau and the man with the handle-bar mustache hadn't had anything to do for two weeks except play with the pet lion they had chained to the door. Lieutenant Duguy used to wet postage stamps on the lion's tongue.

From the post office everyone went into seclusion to read their mail. The riff-raff went to Riga's hotel and the elite went to the honky-tonk.

The girls knew what you were expecting in the post and who from; they knew everyone's business, and they could tell by your face whether it came or not. If it didn't they said: "Better luck on the next boat," and gave you their *L'Illustration* to read.

When the letter eventually came you gave them the stamps.

The tables and seats in that co-

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educational center were set in concrete so the soldiers couldn't throw them at each other. The beer was warm because Docteur Huchon said iced drinks would give you dysentery. A black boy sat on the floor and pulled a cord to swing the mat-fans suspended from the ceiling, and every half-hour he tossed a bucket of water across the cement floor to cool it off.

Bearded soldiers, dirty Somalis, turbaned Arabs, the foreign community, and Madame learned to lift their feet unconsciously and let the tidal wave with its fleet of match boxes, cigarette butts, burnt matches, and crumpled packages of Gitane-bleu sail under and then put their feet down again without taking their eyes from a last month's *Paris-soir*. I'll be damned if I call that adventure.

Out of desperation you hook up with a Cherif from Yemen. The Imam is building up an army of sorts, and the Cherif takes you to Hodeidah.

Hodeidah is pretty bad too, but it's also better than Monte Carlo. Instead of kissing fat ladies' hands for tea you kiss the Koran, and the Koran can't talk.

Just about the time you forget what the taste of ice and the face of a woman is like a military mission of Italians comes in to work for nothing and you find out you're going to get your pay in Paradise. *C'est l'aventure, mes amis. Que voulez-vous?*

You reach Port Said on the deck of a freighter and the British Intelligence Officer who comes aboard treats you like a Prince, a launch at your service and everything. It's a pleasure to help a man like that.

When you reach Alexandria you're a bloody adventurer and probably a spy—and you can't get off. All of your life will be like that.

In Greece you don't click, so you go to Turkey. Turkey has gone nationalist too. They don't trust you and wouldn't want you if they did, but you meet a lovely lady on the boat.

After the months in Abyssinia and Somaliland and Yemen your heart is hungry and that woman tosses a hand-grenade in your scheme of things. She comes into your life like spring to a barefoot army. To change her annexation to *de jure* from *de facto*, you ask her to marry you.

It's time to be serious now. No more flying out in bombers to shake night up like a cocktail, or running across the map to the places where wars are and color and noise and boasting and the variousness of adventure. You're going to get married and have a little boy and play with electric trains.

It's going to make you dull in time and narrow of vision. It's the road that leads to a job in an office, but it's worth it for that woman.

And you know what she says?

She says: "Marry you, Hal? I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth, but I'll tell you what I will do. I'll go to Bucharest and Budapest and Vienna with you."

Arm in arm you lean over a ship's side and watch Istanbul, like a water-color frontispiece from *Arabian Nights*, disappearing in the distance.

There is sunlight on the water and sunlight on the minarets. There must be a million minarets all straight and white and slender, shimmering in the light and pointing straight to Allah. Life is all poetry and color and one woman and many minarets. The beauty of it makes you feel your heart has just taken a bath and become clean again, like the Caaba stone on the Day of Judgment.

Adventure is months of loneliness with sometimes the loan of a few days of beauty. The stories you tell in the cafés when it's all over are only the highlights with the long months sifted out.

The next consul you meet has something to say about immoral young ne'er-do-wells who live with women they aren't married to. He'd be jealous if you lived with a goldfish.

Eventually a day comes when the end of your money is in sight again and the lovely lady of a little while throws a kiss from a train window and then the train pulls out. You wander back to a hotel room suddenly gone all empty.

From it you go to a coffee house gone all empty too. Life has become like an evacuated town and its streets are silent.

A revolution starts in Spain and you pack your bags. The lady marries a lawyer and goes to adventure films in the movies.

The first side you try won't have you because Italians are running the show and they have your name on the list, from Abyssinia, so you shrug your shoulders and join the other. At best a soldier of fortune is only a military prostitute, until he becomes a General or gets the Legion of honor.

As soon as you get yourself in you start thinking of your friends and remember how George cabled you twenty pounds when you were broke in Geneva, so now you repay the favor by getting George in with you.

Two weeks later when you bury George, Hugh says casually: "Thank God we won't have jittering-George with us to put me in a state of chronic nerves anymore."

Spain gets you down. Every street is no man's land when someone is likely to pick you off from a window. You never know who the enemy is or where. The Russians will try to get you shot to strengthen their own position and some *agent provocateur* will try it so he can collect on you.

If you go home with a señorita you are likely to get your throat cut, and if you make a forced

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An Adventurer Retires

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landing behind the enemy lines you are sure to get it cut, but that's all right. You don't expect a war to be Utopia.

However one day your plane crashes and the anarchists want to shoot you for sabotage. That's the end.

When you get out of Spain you find the globe has suddenly become smaller. You can't go to Italy or Germany now. You've worked for the Reds in Spain so none of the Balkan kingdoms will have you. Portugal will take your finger prints if you go there, and if you go to Austria you'll be shadowed.

An American military attaché and his assistant become friendly. They're fine fellows and you like them, but when you get through telling them all about the anti-aircraft fire in Spain they assign an informer to find out if you are up to anything new, and you find yourself in trouble for knowing what you told them. You can't win!

Somehow you don't mind the breach of friendship and the lack of faith that puts you on the "outside," but you do feel insulted that they belittle your intelligence by assigning such a dumb informer to report on you; only a lieutenant too.

In the eyes of your countrymen if you don't work you aren't respectable. Your consulates regard you as an undesirable who is likely to cause them a lot of writing and ruin some bridge games someday. You are never a potential friend who may be able to help them.

The man who is a pariah and an outcast in the eyes of his countrymen becomes a dangerous international character in the eyes of the authorities of whatever country he is traveling in. Your passport has too many stamps and visas. Obviously you are a master mind serving Paris or Rome or Berlin or Moscow, depending on what country you are in.

They make inquiries at your consulate and the reply is almost sure to plant you in the enemy camp. Why is it our officials abroad are so quick to remember a man's obligations to his country and so sure to forget a country's obligation to a man; that as long as a man is honest and labors to acquire respect and position even though it is in another land in an unconventional manner it is his country's obligation to at least not harm him? Besides, it's poor business. Anything should be better than having him on relief.

You try working for an African potentate for awhile and you decide to leave that job for Hubert Julian. One phase of your work is being photographed in uniform with "the Prince." These pictures are captioned: "His Highness, the Nawaub, and Chief-of-Staff, in London," and sent back to Africa to convince his wife's family that he is busy.

That Nawaub trusted no one.

If he sent you on a mission he sent someone else to watch you and another man to watch your watcher.

He never told you what all the mysterious conferences were about until he got in trouble; then he sent you to get him out, and you never knew what "deal" he was transacting on the side until someone had sold him a gold brick and he would call on you to try to get his money back.

Whenever he went out in public you went along to give him face, and at first you would try to give the impression he was "your man" when people stared at you. That never worked. He was a tall Negro, straight as a ramrod and with the air of one who is accustomed to command.

He could stand up and look an English butler right in the eye. Best thing to do when he insisted on going into exclusive restaurants with you was address him as Your Highness, loud enough for everyone to hear. That pleased him, satisfied the head waiter and excused you.

A hundred pounds was nothing if he felt like giving a small party, but to get your pay you had to sell him a brass crown studded with red and green glass, that you found in a theatrical costumer's window.

From being Chief-of-Staff, Military Adviser, and Chief of Protocol to H. H., the Nawaub of T_____, you drift into the most logical business for a soldier of fortune at large. It's the arms and munitions game.

A true soldier loves a gun as an Arab loves a horse. It's a pleasure to talk guns and touch guns. Guns are power. They are the bricks empires were built with, but don't let Senator Nye deceive you into thinking there is big money or easy money selling them.

To get votes you have to fight something. Big Bill Thompson picked on the King of England and Hitler baited the Jews. Mussolini attacked the savages, and there weren't any other windmills left for Senator Nye. Besides, they don't make guns in North Dakota.

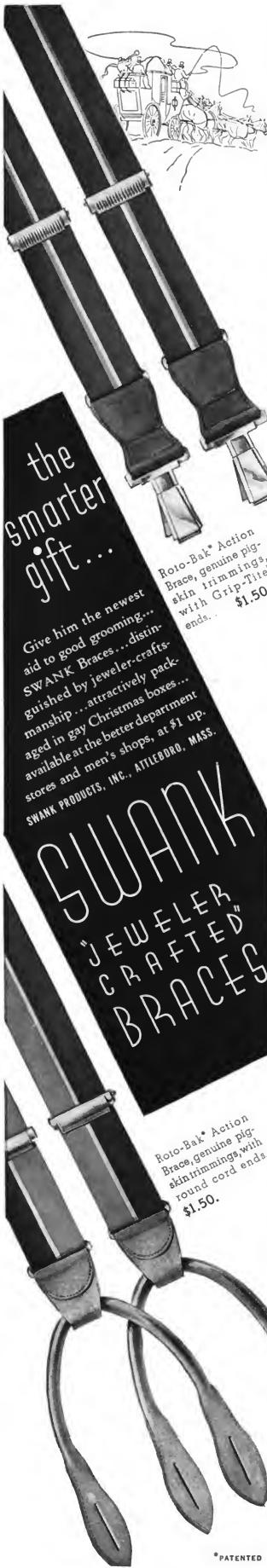
Since Nye and Cordell Hull put Skoda and Schwartzlauser and Vickers on their feet and left the Mauser market to the little countries with cheap money and peasant labor you have to wait months in a hotel lobby; you have to bribe, lie, drink, talk and give dinners to close a small deal at one per cent profit.

A Jew in Anvers is buying your guns and swears they're for some little banana country in South America, so you present his papers and apply for the permit of exportation.

Someone in the war office finds out the papers are faked and the guns are destined for Spain. Someone else gets the profit and you clear out for China.

China is the dream of every

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soldier of fortune who hasn't been there.

Every stranger who arrives in China is regarded as either an adventurer or a missionary, except Mrs. Harkness. She comes to chase baby pandas and she's a business woman.

If you say you're an aviator looking for a job, Bert Hall's reputation still packs enough wallop to knock you colder than a mother-in-law's kiss, but that's nothing against Bert—in China.

It's a mystery why the American Consulate goes to such expense and trouble checking up on new arrivals in the Orient without doing anything to check up on the Russians they send out to do the checking.

Climbing into the pale of respectability in Shanghai is like trying to crowd into a lifeboat that's already full, with someone from the Treasury Department, or another department, waiting to hit you over the head with an oar.

In all fairness to everyone, it's very logical. I'm not telling you this to complain; I'm only telling you to forget adventure and be a mug. Get a job that works you so hard and pays so little no one will envy you; then you'll be okay. If you wander beyond your own horizon you'll be a "black sheep" in the next one.

The men who control American business in Shanghai are old-timers and most of them have a history that has both B. O. and halitosis, but now they are figures in the community and are rated by their race horses.

A new-comer has first to overcome the whispering campaign that he is in the dope business, if he's a business man, and a spy, if he is trying to sell military equipment or work for the government.

Within a week the rickshaw coolies in front of the Cathay are saying: "Look out for that guy. The American consulate is watching him."

An official, when asked about an exporter who is trying to "break in," says: "We haven't anything on him yet, but give us some time. He'll end badly." And so our national prestige stays where we put it.

No one has to worry about the soldier of fortune who gets a job with the Chinese government. He won't last. The man above him will be a returned student who has been waiting for this chance and the men below him will be Chinese who consider it a loss of face to accept any advice from a foreigner. The two put the screws to the man in the middle.

The man in the consulate who furnishes your reference makes about one-third the pay of a third-rate aviator, and the Russian who furnishes him with his information knows what to furnish and how much if he wants to keep having his expense accounts okay'd.

You figure out the answer. If you go to Paradise you're

lucky you won't need a passport. The British would probably go in for nothing, but you would have to buy a visa, and then when you got it you'd get your book stamped: "Not good for travel in Heaven."

I give up! China or Chile, the end is the same. There's always something.

Prometheus was an adventurer. He didn't want to live as other men, so he started a revolution in his way. He revolted against drabness and darkness and the monotony of things as they were.

What happened to Prometheus for longing for color and warmth and fire happens to all of us.

I've had enough! I'm going to leave dash and color and romance to Carl Laemmle's war-scarred towns with a soda fountain and a damned good restaurant behind them.

There's a little village in the Alps Maritimes where the mayor wears blue pants with patches on the knees, and red wine is a frane and a half a bottle. Maybe I can be a gendarme.

Sure, it's been a great show, going to bed in one capital and waking up in another. When Generals sent for me I never knew whether it was to give me a decoration or have me shot.

In less than two years I was under fire in three wars, in three countries, on three continents. There were soldiers marching and planes falling and guns pounding away at little white towns, but there was only one short space of happiness and contentment.

I've almost forgotten what it was like, standing on the balcony of the Grand Geubi, watching the little Emperor send his armies out.

The night Franco moved his Moors up to the gates of Madrid and captured the streetcar terminus seems like a crazy dream now, and the day P. Y. Wong called me in his office, up in Hankow, and sacked me under charge of espionage seems pure flattery to my importance and doesn't matter.

All the memories and cities and strange places were wasted because there isn't anyone now to whom I can say: "Do you remember?"

Back in Paris the old friends linger over coffee and liqueurs and amuse their friends with the stories. When the stories are finished they call for their hats and sticks and gloves and go out in the night and home. My home is in the café, and when I leave I go out in the night.

It's been a fine show, for everyone but me!

Now I'd like a job as a lighthouse keeper somewhere where it's warm, or a night watchman some place where the light isn't too bad for reading.

When I was young I prayed: "Give me a short life in the saddle, Allah; not a long life by the fire!" But Allah is wise. Allah O akbar! #

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